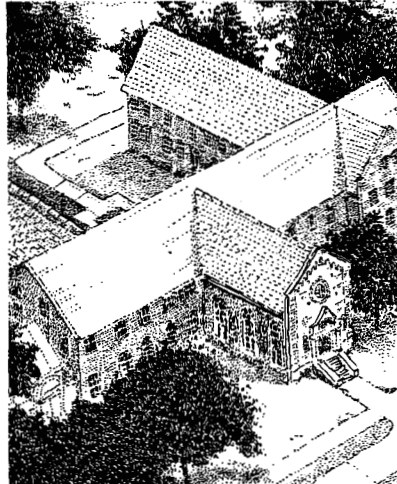


that gave the cancer institute special status and vast resources in the early 1970's. At the time, the majority of the academic research community deplored the fact that politics and Lasker's personal influence worked to give cancer research such prominence. Many would have preferred that NIH maintain its more equal distri-



*The Mary Woodward Lasker Center on the NIH campus.*

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## Congress, NIH Dedicate Center to Mary Lasker

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A beautiful old convent that belonged to the cloistered Catholic Order of the Visitation was officially dedicated the Mary Woodward Lasker Center for Health Research and Education at ceremonies on 19 September at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The center, which adjoins the NIH campus in Bethesda, will house medical students interested in spending a year at NIH in research training under a program jointly sponsored by the institutes and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

The dedication ceremonies were a vivid reminder of the role philanthropist and consummate lobbyist Lasker has played over the years in persuading Congress to increase funds for medical research in areas she particularly favored. It was Lasker, for instance, who was the prime mover behind the National War on Cancer

bution of funding based on the purer intellectual process of peer review. But Mary Lasker prevailed, just as she did a couple of years later when she convinced Congress to give special treatment to the National Heart Institute.

Thomas (Tip) O'Neill, Speaker of the House of Representatives, captured Lasker's influence on Congress when he recalled a day in the early 1970's when Mary Lasker and her select coterie of well-known research physicians came to lunch on Capitol Hill. "You were so upset about funding for cancer, Mary," recalled O'Neill who, for his part, brought appropriations committee members to the lunch to be lobbied. O'Neill captured the way the business of health politics was conducted when he noted that \$140 million was added to the cancer budget that day. The Lasker Center, said O'Neill, is "but a small token from a grateful nation."

Lasker, who is in her eighties, has been a powerhouse in NIH politics for decades. In brief remarks, she revealed that she had been sickly as a young girl and said, "I resolved to do something for medical research when I was 10 years old." She has.

—BARBARA J. CULLITON